DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 064 241 SP 005 728

AUTHOR Gerhardt, Ed.; Miskel, Cecil
TITLE Staff Conflict, Organizational Bureaucracy, and Teacher Satisfaction.
PUB DATE Apr 72
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Assn., Chicago, April 1972

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Administrative Organization; *Bureaucracy; *Conflict; *Job Satisfaction; *Teacher Attitudes

ABSTRACT

This study was to isolate factors in conflict which teachers experience in their work and to determine their relationship to organizational bureaucracy, satisfaction, and central life interests. A stratified random sampling was used for the main position of the study. The school districts were stratified into five groups on the basis of the number of teachers employed. A proportional number of districts were randomly selected from each group. One hundred sixty teachers were randomly selected from each of the five groups totaling 800. The data were collected through a mail procedure. A total of 642 usable questionnaires were returned. Instrumentation included the Conflict Assessment Questionnaire (CAQ) and the School Organization Inventory (SOI). Item content on the questionnaire concerned administrative, student, and staff relations; decision sharing; personal non-material opportunities; work conditions; material inducements; and school priorities. The SOI measured three dimensions of bureaucracy: hierarchy of authority, rules and regulations, and impersonalization. Findings support the assertion that factors in the organization that are external to the individual determine the perceived level of bureaucracy. Because the other research variables were not predictors of bureaucracy, the conclusion that the SOI is a legitimate independent measure of the school structure seems appropriate. The lack of findings related to the central life interest variable can be explained by a poor measuring instrument. Further research is recommended. A 9-item bibliography is included. (MJM)

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Ed Gerhardt

Cecil Miskel
The University of Kansas

SP005728

Annual Meeting
American Educational Research Association
April, 1972

STAFF CONFLICT, ORGANIZATIONAL BUREAUCRACY, AND TEACHER SATISFACTION

Blau and Scott (1962) assert that bureaucratic formalization is one method for reducing uncertainty while allowing for more rational planning and change in formal organizations. However, there appears to be a relationship of mutual dependence between conflict and change in bureaucracies. In the school, conflicts arise between teachers as professionals and administrators as organizational managers over the principles that govern their performances. Although the foregoing conflict is functional in the sense that it tends to generate innovations, the prevention or reduction of dysfunctional conflict is a continuing problem at the operational level of the school. With the foregoing as a basis, the present investigation was concerned with isolating types and sources of conflict which teachers experience in differentially structured public schools. More specifically, the purposes of the study were (1) to isolate factors in conflict which teachers experience in their work and (2) to determine their relationship to organizational bureaucracy, satisfaction, and central life interests.

Conceptual Rationale

The theoretical framework of Mack and Snyder (1957) and the empirical research of Corwin (1963) were used as bases for understanding conflict. Basically, conflict involves an interaction between two or more individuals or alternatives as a result of position or resource scarcity. Therefore,

conflict can arise as a result of incongruency between organizational and individual goals in the form of a dichotomy between the professional authority of teachers and the demands of the formal school organization.

The conflict between professional and bureaucratic authority has been elucidated by Blau and Meyer (1971). They assert that traditional bureaucracies assume that increases in the hierarchy correspond to degrees of competence; that is, superordinates are assumed to have more technical knowledge than anyone else in the organization. However, the increasing level of education and specialization of teachers, coupled with advances in technology, have rendered the traditional assumption invalid.

To study the conflicts involving bureaucratic authority, the following dimensions of organizational structure were posited to be the most important: (1) hierarchy of authority, (2) rules and regulations, and (3) impersonalization. The hierarchy of authority principle asserts that each lower office is controlled and supervised by a higher one. Abstract rules govern the operations of the organization by being applied to particular cases. Finally, the principle of impersonalization maintains that personal considerations are excluded from the decision-making process.

The second variable related to conflict is the satisfaction level of the teachers. Merging the theoretical formulations of Barnard (1938), Dubin (1968), and Herzberg (1959), satisfaction was conceptualized as being composed of the following dimensions: (1) individual work motivation and (2) organizational incentives. Motivation arises within an individual as the result of a desire for

intrinsic factors or motivators and environmental factors or hygienes. Examples of motivators include recognition, achievement, responsibility, advancement, and work itself. Examples of hygienes include salary, interpersonal relationships, supervision, policy and job security.

Barnard's systematic division of organizational incentives into specific inducements and general incentives parallels the above conceptualization of motivation. Therefore, the organizational aspect of satisfaction involves the distribution of incentives to match the motivational patterns of the teachers. Using the assertions of Mack and Snyder, conflict would result when incentives are inadequate or the wrong kind.

Finally, Dubin (1968) suggested that the incongruency or conflict between the needs of the individual and the goals of the organization is mediated by an intervening variable--central life interest. Central life interest is defined as the area of a person's life which serves as his primary source of satisfaction. Consequently, when teaching is not the central life interest of an individual, he will experience less conflict over the distribution of the organizational incentives because his need priorities will be largely sated by incentives received in another area of life.

Synthesizing the foregoing assertions of the conceptual rationale produces the following hypothesis: Authority dimensions of bureaucracy, satisfaction, and central life interests will be significant predictors of teacher conflict.

Methodology

Sample

Two pilot studies were completed to establish the stability and reliability of the research instruments. The first pilot sample consisted of 210 graduate students in education. The second pilot sample consisted of 283 teachers randomly selected from the public schools in Kansas.

A stratified random sampling procedure was used for the main portion of the study. First, the school districts were stratified into five groups on the basis of the number of teachers employed. Second, a proportional number of districts were randomly selected from each group. Third, 160 teachers were randomly selected from each of the five groups of schools for a total N of 800.

The data were collected through a mail procedure. A total of 642 (80%) useable questionnaires were returned. The sampling procedures are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Summary of the Sampling Procedure

Number of Teachers in District	Number of Districts	Total Teachers	Number of Districts Selected	Number of Teachers Selected
0 - 49	177	5,860	10	160
50 - 99	81	5,325	6	160
100 - 249	41	5,669	6	160
250 - 1,999	10	5,416	6	160
2,000 +	2	5,728	2	160
Totals	311	28,098	30	800

Instrumentation

The items for the Conflict Assessment Questionnaire were adapted from the content analysis categories developed by Corwin (1963). The items were selected to correspond on face validity to Barnard's conceptualization of specific inducements and general incentives. A five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "No Conflict" to "Conflict" was added to each item. Varimax and maxplane factor analysis techniques were used on the pilot data to group the items. The scree test, discontinuity of eigenvalues, and interpretability were used to determine that eight conflict factors or subscales were present. Based on the original incentive categories of Barnard and the item content included in each factor, the following names were assigned to the subscales: (1) administrative relations, (2) student relations, (3) staff relations, (4) decision-sharing, (5) personal non-material opportunities, (6) work conditions, (7) material inducements, and (8) school priorities.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients were used to establish reliability. The overall reliability of the CAQ was .94 with factor reliabilities ranging from .64 to .89.

The School Organization Inventory (SOI), as modified by Punch (1969), was used to measure three dimensions of bureaucracy as follows: hierarchy of authority, rules and regulations, and impersonalization. Using Cronbach's alpha coefficients the reliabilities of the foregoing subscales are .78, .78, and .34 respectively.

The measures of satisfaction and central life interests were based on the forced-choice items used by Dubin (1970) in a study of British industry. The first modification of the Dubin instrument was the addition of items to five for central life interests and five for satisfaction. The second change was from a forced choice scale to a five-category Likert-type response ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." The structure of the questionnaires were analyzed using the same procedures discussed in the development of the CAQ. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for relaibility were .54 and .70 respectively.

Design

The BMD 02R program, stepwise regression analysis, was used to analyze the data. An arbitrary cutoff point of adding one percent of explained variance and F ratios were used to determine significant predictor variables.

Findings

Hypothesis

The conflict data were entered as the dependent variable with bureaucracy, satisfaction, central life interest, and demographic data entered as predictor variables. The level of satisfaction and the perceived level of bureaucracy were significant predictors of conflict. Neither the central life interest nor the demographic variables explained one percent of the variance. The relevant data are summarized in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Predictors of Conflict Using
Step-wise Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable	Predictor Variables	Variance Explained (Percent)	Variance Increase (Percent)
Conflict	Satisfaction	8.24	8.24*
	Bureaucracy	14.37	6.13*
	Central Life Interest	14.39	.02

*Significant Predictor

To further delineate the predictors of conflict, each of the eight conflict subscales was entered as a dependent variable with the three dimensions of bureaucracy, satisfaction, central life interest, and the demographic data being entered as predictor variables. The hierarchy of authority dimension of bureaucracy and the level of satisfaction were the only consistent predictor variables. Data germane to this analysis are summarized in Table 3.

Related Findings

Further analyses were completed in an effort to better understand which data items should be considered predictors or independent, intervening, and dependent variables. Based on the assumption that bureaucracy exists as it is perceived by the individual, the dimensions of bureaucracy were entered as dependent variables with the demographic items, the conflict subscales, the satisfaction level, and the central life interest score entered as predictor variables. None of the variables were significant predictors of bureaucracy.

TABLE 3

Significant Predictors of Conflict Using
Step-wise Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable	Predictor Variables	Variance Explained (Percent)	Variance Increase (Percent)
Conflict - Total	Hierarchy of Authority	8.84	8.84
	Satisfaction	15.15	6.32
	Sex	18.06	2.91
	Age	19.09	1.03
Subscale No. 1 Administrative Relationships	Hierarchy of Authority	11.48	11.48
	Satisfaction	17.51	6.03
	Sex	18.58	1.07
Subscale No. 2 Work Conditions	Hierarchy of Authority	7.42	7.42
	Age	11.06	3.64
	Satisfaction	12.45	1.39
Subscale No. 3 Material Inducements	Sex	4.87	4.87
	Satisfaction	7.98	3.11
	Rules and Regulations	10.16	2.18
Subscale No. 4 Student Relationships	Satisfaction	8.39	8.39
	Age	11.46	3.06
	Hierarchy of Authority	13.74	2.28
	Teaching Level	15.88	2.15
Subscale No. 5 Decision Sharing	Hierarchy of Authority	4.83	4.83
	Satisfaction	6.64	1.81
Subscale No. 6 School Priorities	Teaching Level	8.84	8.84
	Hierarchy of Authority	12.37	3.53
Subscale No. 7 Personal Non-Material Opportunities	Sex	5.28	5.28
	Hierarchy of Authority	7.75	2.47
Subscale No. 8 Staff Relationships	Satisfaction	4.12	4.12
	Hierarchy of Authority	6.30	2.18

The final analyses were attempts to predict the level of satisfaction and central life interest. Significant predictors of satisfaction were the following: central life interests, conflict, teaching level, and sex. Elementary and female teachers indicated a higher level of satisfaction. The only significant predictor of central life interest was the age of the teacher. Older teachers indicated a greater perception of their teaching position as being their central life interest. Data related to these findings are summarized in Table 4.

TABLE 4

Significant Predictors of Satisfaction and Central Life Interest Using Step-wise Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable	Predictor Variables	Variance Explained (Percent)	Variance Increase (Percent)
Satisfaction	Central Life Interest	15.50	15.50
	Conflict	22.23	6.73
	Teaching Level	24.85	2.62
	Sex	25.87	1.02
Central Life Interest	Age	3.56	3.56

Discussion

Theory

The hypothesis and supporting rationale were partially supported by the research findings. The level of satisfaction and the combined subscales of

bureaucracy were significant predictors of the total conflict scores. More specifically, the hierarchy of authority dimension of bureaucracy was a significant predictor of seven conflict dimensions; the satisfaction level was a significant predictor of six conflict dimensions.

In addition, the findings that none of the research variables are predictors of bureaucracy and that conflict is predicted by certain bureaucracy dimensions support the assertion that the school hierarchy of authority is an independent variable for teacher conflict. However, no conclusions about the independent-dependent relationship between satisfaction and conflict is possible because both variables are reciprocal predictors.

Practice

Since the hierarchy of authority dimension of the school organization was found to be a consistent predictor of teacher conflict, it follows that the role behavior of the administrator is a central factor in determining the level of teacher conflict. To reduce the conflict experienced by teachers, alternative administrative behaviors that diminish the pervasiveness or sharpness of authority distinctions between teachers and administrators are needed. One alternative that would conceivably reduce teacher conflict is the administrator as a coordinator, allocator or manager of organizational resources rather than as a director of curriculum and instruction. This alternative follows from the conflict between professional and administrative authority described in the theoretical rationale. A second alternative that would help reduce teacher conflict would be added administrator training and practice in human relations and group dynamics.

Research

The findings support the assertion that factors in the organization, external to the individual, determine the perceived level of bureaucracy. Because the other research variables were not predictors of bureaucracy, the conclusion that the School Organizational Inventory is a legitimate independent measure of the school structure seems appropriate.

However, the lack of findings related to central life interest variable can be partially explained by the poor measuring instrument. Combining the low reliability of measurement and the firm conceptual foundation, additional research must be completed before discarding central life interest as an unimportant variable in studies of work and organizations.

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